



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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In Reply Refer To:
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Memorandum

To: State Fire Management Officers

From: Ron Dunton 
Assistant Director, Fire and Aviation

Subject: Helicopter Emergency Long-line Last Option (HELLO)

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Fire Leadership Team (FLT) and ground firefighting personnel have requested the capability for helicopter emergency extraction of critically injured firefighters. Several sources of these capabilities exist elsewhere with the National Park Service (NPS) short haul program, the recently created United States Forest Service (USFS) emergency extraction short haul program and potential military extraction aircraft. However, these resources are not always available or capable of the timely extraction of seriously injured firefighters.

Consistent with the BLM priorities of firefighter and public safety the National Aviation Office (NAO) in concert with Fire Operations and the FLT have created several HELLO decision support tools. The HELLO mission is defined as transporting a critically injured person from an otherwise inaccessible location using a helicopter long-line. The ultimate goal is to get a critically injured patient to definitive care by the quickest means available.

Departure from existing policy/procedures to respond to an emergency outside of a person's training is supported by the Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide (IHOG) (Chapter 17, V.A) and the BLM National Aviation Plan (NAP) (5.6). The HELLO is intended to assist BLM personnel when faced with the decision of how and if to conduct an emergency extraction. These decision support tools are not regulatory in nature but, are designed as optional tools to help incident personnel make good risk-based decisions on whether HELLO is the safest most efficient option. It is important to understand that HELLO is a Last Option to be considered after all other extraction methods have been evaluated and determined to not be feasible. Under no circumstances will any BLM helitack program promote HELLO as a capability of their program.

Aviation policy deviations are allowed in certain life threatening situations identified below. The IHOG Ch-17, V. A:

In certain life threatening emergencies it may be necessary for personnel to deviate from policy. This may include Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) deviations, seating configurations and riding in unapproved aircraft and/or with unapproved pilots. These situations usually involve search and rescue or medevac operations being conducted by local authorities using public agency, military, commercial or private aircraft.

The BLM NAP 5.6 - Emergency Exception to Policy:

Federal employees who are involved in an event in which there clearly exists an imminent threat to human life, and there is insufficient time to utilize approved methods, may deviate from policy to the extent necessary to preserve life (reference 350 DM 1.3.B). The following provisions and follow-up actions apply:

- *Personnel involved are expected to use good judgment.*
- *Personnel involved in the decision making associated with deviating from policy must weigh the risks verses benefit.*
- *Any deviations must be documented on a SAFECOM.*

Attachment